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# HUMAN DESTINY AND THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY

BY  
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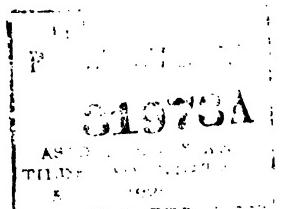
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the truth of these doctrines, their force being accentuated by the circumstance that those who have brought them to light are not themselves aware in what direction they are tending, and what service they are thus unconsciously rendering to the cause of Revealed Religion.

The greatest, perhaps—and certainly the most interesting—of these facts are those which have reference to the nature and activities of the human mind: activities which are now seen to be of a far more complex and intricate character than had ever been imagined. They have resulted in systems of thought which may, for practical purposes, be grouped together under the now popular term, “the new psychology.” It should be stated at once, however, that this psychology is only new to the modern scientific researcher, who has been bound hand and foot by a false materialistic system of thinking, and that it is not new to the Catholic philosopher and theologian.

But it is not proposed, in this connection,

to employ the definitions and terminology of Catholic philosophy, for the simple reason that these would but complicate matters for the layman and demand of him a study of the subject which, in most instances, is not possible for him. It is proposed to use such simple terms and definitions as have come into use in the popular scientific treatment of the subject and which are, in all respects, more serviceable for practical purposes. The trained Catholic philosopher will have no difficulty in harmonizing them with those which have been adopted in his own more accurate but more complex system of thought. Any one acquainted with the tenets of Catholic psychology will easily recognize the accepted doctrines of actual and habitual knowledge as corresponding to the newer terminology of conscious and subconscious.

Modern psychology divides the human mind into two parts or sections, blending with one another, but each with its own more or less distinct and separate mode of activity. Some investigators have gone so

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far as to speak of these two forms of activity as two distinct and separate personalities, which is, of course, an inaccurate and indeed erroneous mode of reasoning. The very fact that we are aware of both of these mental processes, and that we can exercise over them a power of control and selection, is evidence that they are but two forms of activity of the one undivided soul or personality.

There is thus, in the first place, the ordinary working part of the mind which puts us in contact with the practical, sensible, everyday world, with which we do our normal thinking, and with the operations of which we are all familiar. We employ this part of our mind for the purpose of our training and education, and for the storing of its memory with those facts and experiences which we find it necessary to retain for the building up of our character and personality and for the carrying on of the occupations and business of life. It is not necessary to speak of this form of mental activity at any length, since we are

all familiar with it and can study it in any work on elementary psychology. But modern research has shown that by far the more extensive and intricate portion of our mental apparatus is that which is subconscious—which lies beneath the threshold of this ordinary, working, conscious mind, and of the existence and activity of which we only catch occasional glimpses and indications.

Now, whatever facts with regard to the subconscious mind may as yet be but partially or imperfectly known, and whatever modifications our notions respecting it may yet have to undergo, one all important and universally admitted fact stands out with clearness and cannot be controverted. The human memory is of a far more complex and prodigious character than had hitherto been supposed. While it was formerly held that there are preserved and more or less permanently retained in it only those facts and experiences which have, for various reasons, left an exceptionally strong impression, it is now known that all that has

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ever passed into it through the senses is accurately and permanently stored up and recorded and can never be wiped out by anything that may happen to the mental or physical constitution. I will not here present the results of my own studies and observations, but will let psychological experts speak who are dealing with the matter from a purely scientific point of view, and who have manifestly so far never looked at it from the spiritual and religious standpoint.

(a) "The important principle is forced upon us in strong relief that it matters not in what period of life or in what state experiences have occurred or how long a time has intervened since their occurrence; they still may be conserved. They become dormant, but under favorable conditions they may be awakened and may enter conscious life. We have seen \* \* \* that childhood experiences that are supposed to have long been buried in oblivion may be conserved. \* \* \* It is impossible to say what experiences of our daily life have failed to be

conserved and what are awaiting only a favorable condition of reproduction to be stimulated into activity as memory. The inability to recall an experience is no evidence whatever that it is not conserved.

\* \* \*

"We should not overlook the fact that among mental experiences are those of the inner as well as the outer life. To the former belong the hopes and aspirations, the regrets, the fears, the doubts, the self-communions and wrestling with self, the wishes, the loves, the hates, all that we are not willing to give to the outer world, and all that we would forget and would strive not to admit to ourselves. All this inner life belongs to our experience and is subject to the same law of conservation." (\*)

(b) "It has long been known that the imperfection of the memory we consciously retain of our past is only apparent. Stored within the psyche, but usually inac-

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(\*) "The Unconscious," by Morton Prince, M. D., LL.D., Professor of Diseases of the Nervous System, Tufts College Medical School.

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cessible and to be reached only by some stimulus of abnormal strength, is the whole record, without exception, of every experience the individual has ever passed through, every influence felt and every impression received. The fact asserts itself in delirium, under hypnosis, through some powerful mental shock, in insanity and in trance." (\*).

Although we have no conscious knowledge of the extent, and certainly only limited access to, this subconscious register, we have nevertheless certain unmistakable indications of its existence. Some of these are as follows:

(a) In dream states, in states of reverie, of partial hypnosis or mental passivity, things are brought to our knowledge which we thought we had long forgotten; and even though they may present themselves to us in distorted or disconnected form, we nevertheless realize that they are

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(\*) "Man in the Light of Modern Psychology,"  
by E. M. Caillard, in the "Hibbert Journal,"  
July, 1920, page 783.

there—that, so far from having been blotted out, both they and their attendant circumstances have been retained with quite extraordinary accuracy.

(b) Often such memories are awakened and called into activity by the association of ideas. A sound, a word spoken, an unusual phrase, an odor, the sight of a human face or of a picture, will awaken in us a train of thought which will ultimately bring us face to face with a fact, an incident, an experience—possibly trifling and unimportant in its character and perhaps only superficially observed at the time—but nevertheless indelibly inscribed upon the tablets of the subconscious region of the mind.

(c) In old age, in some forms of accident or sickness, when the normal mind is apparently in a state of decay or paralysis, and when, in any case, the particular brain cells which received the original impression have long perished, remote events and experiences are vividly recalled—often, indeed, in far more vivid form than was the

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case in times of physical and mental health and vigor.

(d) In the hands of an experienced hypnotist the entire past history and life of an individual, passively submitting himself to the process, may be disclosed, perplexing circumstances cleared up, even facts revealed which the individual, in his normal state, would strain every nerve to conceal, and the disclosure of which may be fraught with grave consequences to him. On his restoration to his normal condition, he will have no knowledge whatever of the disclosures which he has made. It is largely through experiments of this latter kind that the theory of the subconscious mind, first scientifically formulated by the late F. W. H. Myers, has at length established itself on a sound, scientific foundation.

But we have to recognize further the fact that this subconscious mind is not only "a kind of vast storehouse wherein are preserved, seemingly without time limit and in most perfect detail, memory images of everything we have seen, heard or other-

wise experienced through our sense organs. It is also a kind of workshop for the facile manipulation of ideas, including even the elaboration of complicated trains of thought. \* \* \* It is a kind of workshop where the ego rummages among the memory images of its past experiences to develop trains of thought and reach definite conclusions with a minimum of effort."(\*)

The subconscious mind never sleeps, but, on the contrary, is in a state of constant activity, and more intensively so, as we have seen, when the conscious part of the mind is in a condition of lethargy and when the brain is asleep. Its processes are infinitely complex and many-sided, one thought or impression or idea acting upon another, and producing conclusions, often strange and startling and even at variance with those of the normal mind. Many of these may remain permanently latent; many are presented to the normal mind in

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(\*) "Psychology and Parenthood," by H. Addington Bruce.

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what has been technically called subliminal or "subconscious uprushes."

The nature and character of these uprushes are necessarily determined by the *kind* of material which has been deposited in the subconscious mind, and we can see already here how fruitful their effect may be both for good and evil. It is, beyond doubt, in this region that we have to look for the source of temptation, as well as for good and evil promptings—for good and evil resolves and for the possibilities of the noblest and meanest actions.

All must necessarily depend upon the contents of the subconscious storehouse. A mill can only grind out the corn that has been put into it; it cannot yield good meal if inferior or worthless corn has been used. This, of course, is treating the matter from the purely natural point of view without touching upon those divine inspirations or suggestions which undoubtedly connect with the matter deposited. Of these, more will be said hereafter.

But the all-important thought with

which we are concerned here is the fact that all that rises up from the subconscious mind remains under the control of the will and of the one personality. It may accept or reject what the subconscious mind presents, and the nature and degree of this control necessarily depend upon the kind of training the normal mind and will have received, and ultimately, of course, upon the acceptance or rejection of religious truths or principles.

We all know from personal experience and observation that, in the matter of these subconscious uprushes, we always stand before a choice, a choice rapidly and instinctively made in all the affairs and concerns of human life, but always determined by that power of discrimination and selection which is an attribute of the individual character.

Man thus always and under all circumstances remains an agent responsible for his actions; for, even though he be overwhelmed by some unexpected and inimical uprush, this would not be because his will

has ceased to act, but because he has not trained that will aright or because he has deposited in his mental storehouse material that ought not to be there.

It is impossible, in this connection, and in a necessarily brief study of the subject, to show the application of these principles to systems of education—how everything, in the formation of human character, must depend upon the contents of the subconscious storehouse, upon the kind of material deposited and upon the training of the will and the moral faculties—the power of selection and discrimination acquired. But it would be well if parents and the teachers of the young made a practical study of the subject and presented it in an intelligent and rational form to those under their care. It is not too much to say that our entire system of education would be revolutionized by such study.

What is here emphasized is the outstanding fact that all that a man has learned or experienced in this world remains his possession throughout life, and

that, committed to the activity of the subconscious mind, it produces an endless variety of combinations, and, in the end, turns that subconscious mind into a great treasure-house to which we have, as we have seen, only a very limited access in our present state of existence. Only an infinitesimal portion of it comes into use, and is of service to us in our life in the body.

But, since it is preserved and since nature must have a purpose in preserving it, are we not driven to the conclusion that it will come into full use and operation in another life, (for which Religion declares we are destined,) and for purposes which we can, beyond doubt, faintly discern here and now, but which we shall probably fully discern when we are actually in that other life?

The existence and nature, therefore, of the subconscious region of the mind may surely, in fairness, be regarded as additional proof of the survival of the human soul—of a life after the death of the body,

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the foundations for which are laid here and now, and the nature of which is shaping itself here and now according to wise laws and with unerring certainty.

It would be difficult to account intelligently for these complex processes of the human mind on the assumption that the soul is blotted out and annihilated when physical death terminates its state of union with the body. Why, we may justly ask, do the best of men only attain to wisdom when they are not likely to want it much longer here on earth?

## CHAPTER II.

### GOD AND MAN

THE second great truth of Religion upon which recent psychological research can be shown to throw a clearer light is that which treats of the intimate and vital relation between God and man, and of the nature and degree of human responsibility which that relationship involves.

The Church teaches and the Holy Scriptures emphatically declare that Christ "gave Himself a redemption for all," (\*) and that He "will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (\*\*) But since the revealed truth here spoken of is not self-evident and cannot be reached by the natural understanding, and since man's destiny is declared to depend upon its acceptance or rejec-

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(\*) I Timothy II, 6.

(\*\*) I Timothy II, 4.

tion, it becomes evident that God's inspirations, His invitation to believe and embrace His truth, must be reaching all men. Both reason and our knowledge of the nature of man confirm this. If it were not so, we may well believe that the belief in God and in a future life and human responsibility would long since have disappeared. The very existence of any kind of religion would be inconceivable without it.

Universal experience, on the other hand, proclaims with a loud voice that these divine inspirations exist and are in more or less sustained activity during life.

But how comes it to pass, we may ask—and thousands have never ceased to ask,—that while some men respond to these inspirations, believe in their reality and yield obedience to them, others disregard them and deliberately and persistently refuse to obey them? Does God favor some men more than others? Are the inspirations more forcible and imperative with some than with others? Does God show, as it were, a kind of favoritism in the

matter? The problem is, I think, solved by our study of the laws which are seen to be operative in the human mind.

The subconscious region of the mind, being the more spiritual and therefore the more spiritually receptive part of our nature, and hence in more direct contact with the spiritual world, may readily be assumed to be a channel by which the divine inspirations reach the soul—by which an initial contact with the supernatural order is easily made. (\*)

This seems so reasonable and explains so many perplexing mysteries of the spiritual life that its truth is discerned even by some of those who are working on purely scientific lines. "If there be higher spiritual agencies," wrote the late Prof. William James, (\*\*) "that can directly

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(\*) This terminology of Modern Psychology corresponds to such freer states of the soul's self-consciousness as are verified in periods when the sense life is in abeyance as in times of certain forms of mental prayer or even of hypnotic trance.

(\*\*) In "Varieties of Religious Experience."

touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so might be our possession of a subconscious region which only should yield access to them."

But it must be evident that such inspirations, in order to become active and effective, and yet leave the will and consequently human responsibility and power of co-operation intact, must penetrate into the normal conscious mind which alone can exercise respecting them a power of choice—deliberate acceptance or rejection. And such acceptance or rejection may be determined by a variety of conditions and circumstances.

There is, in the first place, the will itself. It may have contracted habits of independence and of rebellion against any kind of extraneous authority. It may resent the divine interference with the freedom of its operations. It may be dominated by that form of intellectual pride which strives to resist the imposition of an authority higher than itself. While, therefore, perhaps clearly recognizing the

reality and genuineness of the divine call, it may deliberately and consciously refuse to obey it.

"Man," says the Council of Trent, "may receive or reject this inspiration of God, he may turn to God or remain in sin." And the pride which rejects is, according to St. Thomas, "an ill-regulated desire of our own excellence, and is not only of its kind a mortal sin, of special malice, and more grievous than all the others, but it is also the fountain and source whence every other sin proceeds, since it exercises a sort of influence on all other crimes." (\*)

Or the will may defer its obedience to a more convenient time. Or it may make a partial and incomplete surrender, causing the soul to be incessantly halting between two opinions in the matter of religion. We are all acquainted with this type of man. Indeed, every thoughtful man knows from experience that, whatever the nature and force of a divine inspiration may be,

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(\*) 2.2.q.162.A.2.C.

his will remains free to accept or to reject, and that there are moments in his life when he is engaged in a very real conflict with respect to it.

If the soul finally resists the divine inspiration, it is not because that inspiration has ceased to operate, but because it is blocked by the will which prevents it from so penetrating into the conscious mind as to become effective. It remains latent in the subconscious, giving evidence of its existence by the uneasiness of conscience which it causes. We are not automatons. God impels and invites our co-operation, but He does not compel. He does not—and, indeed, cannot—save a man against his will. Such salvation could not be a true salvation. We thus come to understand why Holy Scriptures tells us, on the one hand, that “God will have all men to be saved,” and, on the other, that we must “with fear and trembling work out our salvation.” (\*) It is clearly and

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(\*) Phillip II, 12.

always a case of co-operation.

Do we not here find a rational solution of a problem which has often perplexed us—a reconciliation between the apparently conflicting teachings on God's inspirations and human responsibility? Unbelief, clearly, is ultimately not a matter of the understanding but of the will. The most learned of men have, as we know, accepted the doctrines of Revealed Truth, while equally learned men have wholly repudiated and rejected them. It would have been a pitiable state of things for the great mass of mankind if the apprehension of Divine Truth had been made dependent upon intellectual culture and learning.

There are, in the second place, the passions. There is the slavery of the senses. And this applies not merely to the mere animal desires and gratifications, but to those cravings for power, for possessions, for distinction, with which the poor shipwrecked world of our day is only too well acquainted. When these latter assume undue and illegitimate proportions they,

like the lower animal passions, block the divine inspirations and prevent their access to the soul. They cause the soul to fall into a kind of sleeping sickness, rendering it deaf and blind to all spiritual claims and considerations. It is difficult, for instance, to conceive of anything in heaven or on earth that is likely to detach the modern money slave from the craving for wealth and earthly possessions.

St. Alphonsus says:

“This foe (the flesh) is so terrible that when he fights with us, he, as it were, takes away all light; he makes us forget all our meditations, all our good resolutions; he makes us also disregard all the truths of faith and even almost lose the fear of the divine punishments. For he conspires with our natural inclinations which drive us with the greatest violence to the indulgence of sensual pleasures. He who in such moments does not have recourse to God is lost.”

There is and, indeed, can be no affinity, no rapport, between a passion-enslaved

soul and the supernatural order—no element upon which a divine inspiration can act and with which it can connect. Such a soul lacks the very power of spiritual apprehension and discernment. A thick darkness shuts out the divine light. Its state may be compared with that of a man who has no ear for music. The world of sound and harmony exists, but it does not exist for him. His physical inability excludes him from it. He hears the sounds but they convey no meaning to him.

"The passions are like dense vapors which, rising from the depths of conscience, place themselves between the eye of the soul and the sum of truth and intercept the rays of divine justice."

And the mind, vaguely perceiving the divine inspiration but constitutionally incapable of appropriating it, casts about for means of relief, for reasonings and arguments that will deliver and quiet it—that will enable it to persuade itself that such inspirations are mere imaginings and delusions.

It is from these slaves of passion and of uncontrolled cravings and ambition that emanate many of the apparently plausible arguments against the truths of Christianity. Such men loudly declare that they do not believe them, that the Christian doctrines are unreasonable; but they cannot leave the subject alone, because God does not leave them alone. He causes them pangs of conscience, and it is often conscience and not superior intelligence which is at work in these plausible reasonings.

Here, too, St. Paul has touched the very root of the matter when he says:

"The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand because it is spiritually examined." (\*)

In any case, it must be clear that men who are up to the neck in the mud of a sensual life or of a life filled with worldly desires and ambitions, cannot be reliable

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(\*) I Corinthians II, 14.

critics of religion or of the realities of the supernatural order. We do not invite the blind to give us correct ideas of our pictures, nor the deaf to pass judgment on the value of a musical composition.

But the divine inspirations may also be blocked by the worthlessness of the matter which has been deposited in the mind, sub and supra. It is certainly here where we can best see the divine law as to the sequence of cause and effect in practical operation. "Be not deceived," writes the apostle, "God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting." (\*). The law holds good in the moral as well as in the physical order.

There is manifestly, on these principles, little to be hoped for from a mind that has systematically, and almost exclusively, fed

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(\*) Galatians VI, 7-8.

on noxious and worthless literature—on the stuff issuing from the yellow press and from the cheap and sensational magazines; from a mind filled with trivialities—with accounts of murder, divorce and suicide. The subconscious mind, in such a case becomes a veritable pest-house—a dung-heap, from which only poisonous vapors arise which make it impossible for the conscious mind to abstract from it serviceable material, and to formulate serious thoughts and principles. And what affinity is there between such a mind and divine inspirations? It cannot even connect with them, much less apprehend and assimilate them. It lives in a world, the very atmosphere of which is inimical to them. The same applies to minds that have constantly absorbed the arguments of irreligious and pseudo-scientific writers, who, because they themselves have no understanding of spiritual things, would persuade others that they do not really exist—that Revealed Religion has no substantial foundation.

The world, alas! is full of this class of men, of these poisoners of the very well-springs of human life and happiness. They are not necessarily evil and immoral men; on the contrary, they often present to the outer world a highly respectable appearance, but they are men dead to the spiritual order, aimless and superficial in all their thinking, and unresponsive to any and every kind of divine invitation or admonition. Such men are very apt to speak in persuasive terms of the failure of Christianity, but they are unmindful, and indeed incapable, of recognizing the fact that not Christianity but they themselves are the failure. And yet it is such men too whom God desires to save and towards whose souls He must be directing His inspirations. But the worthless and offensive contents of their subconscious minds block those inspirations, so that they never penetrate into the soul's innermost life, but glance off like an arrow that has missed its aim or spent its force.

The same applies necessarily and inevitably to the pleasures and diversions of life when these assume undue and unreasonable proportions. They enfeeble and paralyze the higher faculties of the soul, and so thoroughly absorb and enslave it that it is either incapable of responding to higher spiritual admonitions or unable to discern and apprehend their meaning and significance.

The inspiration, of course, may ultimately cease or it may continue; but remain, as it were, latent in the soul causing a vague restlessness and uneasiness which leads to that ever-increasing craving for amusement and diversion of which we have in our modern life so striking and startling a spectacle.

What visitor from some other planet would believe our assertion that the thousands who spend their nights in all kinds of self-indulgence and who never give a serious thought to higher duties and considerations nevertheless claim to have im-

mortal souls, for whom the present transitory life is the one sphere of training for a higher life and whose eternal destiny is determined by it?

So far as this higher life and God's admonitions are concerned, we may surely say of the vast majority of this class of men that "having ears, they hear not; and having eyes, they see not," and that the unsatisfied claims of God and of their souls, and the resulting restlessness, are often the true cause of their unreasonable indulgence in these diversions and amusements. God manifestly adapts His spiritual operations to the state of the soul to which they are directed, and man perceives them in proportion as he has fitted himself to perceive them. This is probably the meaning of that striking utterance of our Lord:

"If any man will do the will of Him (God), he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (\*).

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(\*) St. John VII, 17.

'With great truth writes a famous Catholic student of human nature (\*):

"There is light enough for those who are disposed to see and darkness for others who are disinclined. There is illumination sufficient to inform the elect, and obscurity sufficient to humble them. There is obscurity sufficient to prevent the reprobates from seeing, and illumination sufficient to condemn them and to render them inexcusable."

And again:

"The exhilaration produced by amusement is not happiness, for it arises from what is extraneous to ourselves. It is therefore dependent on circumstances and consequently liable to be disturbed by a thousand accidents and unavoidable misfortunes."

It was Pascal's deep conviction that the mad race after wealth and after the gratification obtained from incessant diversion and amusement, is due to man's spiritual

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(\*) Pascal in "Thoughts."

restlessness and to his desire never to be alone with his own thoughts—not to be compelled to listen to the still small voice speaking to his heart. It is quite forgotten that if that voice is really God's voice, it is scarcely likely to cease from speaking while life lasts.

This is perhaps best illustrated in the deep regret of the aged over an ill-spent and misdirected life which may not have been positively sinful as the world judges sin, but in which all those things which really matter have been constantly ignored and neglected and in which all the energies of the soul have been frittered away in purely temporal pursuits and trivialities. Such persons often admit, at the end of life, that they have never known any real and solid happiness and that they are looking with dread on a state of existence for which they have done nothing to fit themselves.

And, according to the observations of those who have studied these conditions and states of mind, such uneasiness is

well-founded and is by no means due to purely natural and physical causes. Its tendency is to increase as life advances and as death draws near.

A Danish physician of wide experience has made an inquiry into the state of mind at the time immediately preceding death and has come to the conclusion:

Firstly—"That while the nearness of death deadens the exterior senses and lessens bodily pain, the interior senses experience an extraordinary degree of sharpness and illumination; and

Secondly—"That the severity of the actual death-agony depends far more upon the moral state of the dying—upon their sense of responsibility and the testimony of their conscience, than upon the physical. If the inner voice," he writes, "give a clear and certain sound and there be in the soul a well-grounded religious assurance, the moment of death may be a very happy one. This surely," he continues, "is

a boon for which we should always pray to God." (\*)

The accuracy of this conclusion finds remarkable confirmation in the following statement which occurs in Plato's "Republic." The writer, being a pagan, pre-Christian philosopher, can manifestly be speaking only from personal observation:

"You know, O Socrates, that when a man thinks that he is drawing near to death, certain things, as to which he had previously been very tranquil, awaken in his bosom anxiety and alarm. What has been told him of hell and the punishment of the wicked, the stories at which he had formerly laughed or mocked, now fill his soul with trouble. He fears that they may prove true. Enfeebled by age, or brought nearer to the frightful abodes, he seems to perceive them with greater clearness and force, and is therefore disturbed by doubts and apprehensions. He reviews his past

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(\*) Dr. E. Hornemann, Chief to the Royal Hospital and Professor in the University of Copenhagen.

life and seeks what evil he may have done. If he finds, on examination, that his life has been iniquitous, he awakes often in the night, agitated and shuddering, as a child, with sudden terrors, trembles and lives in fearful expectation;" (\*) or, as one may add with St. Paul, "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

Many other conditions of mind and of life might be mentioned which can be shown to be inimical to the acceptance of God's inspirations and invitations and which go to illustrate the law which is at work. Just as there is an endless variety of character, so there is an endless variety of influences acting upon character and producing definite and inevitable results. But this book is to be brief and suggestive only, and a few illustrations must suffice in order to outline the principle which is urged for consideration. A thoughtful reader will have no difficulty in following out its train of reasoning, and in testing

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(\*) Cephalus, in Plato's "Republic."

its legitimacy by the actual facts of life and experience. He can scarcely fail to recognize the main truth here set forth and so forcefully confirmed by recent scientific research—that man's salvation must always be a matter of co-operation with God and that, in this matter, man has a far more important and serious part to perform than is commonly assumed. He must labor for the possession of spiritual truth—for the pearl of great price; he must surrender much—sometimes all—in order to possess it. He must remove the obstacles which hinder the access of light and grace to his soul. He must cleanse his Augean mental stable and must keep it clean. He must not fill his subconscious storehouse with noxious and worthless matter, but, by cultivating pure and elevated trains of thought and true virtue, fit it for the occupation of the Divine Guest. He must create conditions which can connect and which are in affinity with, the current of divine operations. He is, in this

sense, most certainly the arbiter of his own destiny.

The only thing which might be urged against this contention is the case of those apparently sudden conversions to God, including cases of a late or death-bed repentance, where a very flood of light appears to overwhelm a manifestly sinful and hardened soul and where the law here enunciated would seem to be entirely overthrown. But it will be found, on fuller consideration, that this is not really the case, but that, on the contrary, there has either preceded such conversion a certain God-ward train of thought, or that there is, in such a soul, some striking characteristic or virtue with which the divine inspiration can connect. It may have remained hidden from the world and even from the soul itself, only rising into consciousness when the conditions were favorable. Such souls have, perhaps, all along had a keen sense of their sin and uncleanness and have vaguely longed for deliverance. Or they have, in spite of their sins,

practiced at least the virtue of humility or charity—virtues with which, if the soul be fully awakened, the divine inspiration may well be believed to be able to connect. The conversion may, therefore, in no sense have been a sudden one from God's point of view.

We have, I think, a good illustration of this in the conversion of the Apostle St. Paul. It was sudden so far as the divine appeal and the Apostle's immediate response are concerned; but we might not regard it as such if we could know more of the moral state of the Apostle which preceded it. It was, more probably, but the crisis in the history and development of his soul—its convalescence from a long state of spiritual sickness and deformity. St. Paul's character, as the after history shows, was a very sincere and beautiful one, his conscience a very tender one, and his fierce persecutions were perhaps the misdirected efforts of his soul to silence the clamorings of conscience. "It is hard for thee," said the divine voice, "to kick

against the goad." Who can say how long the Apostle had thus been kicking against the goad ,and against his growing convictions, and what soul-agony had preceded his seemingly sudden change of mind and his immediate and whole-hearted surrender? It is no mere forcing of a principle to say that, here too, the workings of the subconscious mind provide us with the true and really adequate explanation of the matter.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE JUDGMENT DAY

A THIRD and vital doctrine of Christianity which receives remarkable confirmation from a better understanding of the operations of the human mind is that of the Judgment Day—a doctrine, to the truth of which other religions, too, and our own instinctive perceptions bear testimony.

Psychological research has most certainly shown not only the entire reasonableness, but also what one may call the inevitableness of the Judgment Day. It has also shown us the form in which it may be conceived to take place.

The teaching of both the Old and New Testaments on the subject is clear and is beyond all dispute and controversy. It may be summed up in such texts as these:

"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." (\*)

"We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body; according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." (\*\*)

A vision of the judgment day, the attendant circumstances of which—allowing for the allegorical form in which it is presented—are strikingly in keeping with what is contended for in this book, is given us by St. John in the Book of the Apocalypse:

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. \* \* \* And whosoever was not found written in the book of life.

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(\*) Hebrews IX, 27.

(\*\*) II Corinthians V, 10.

was cast into the pool of fire." (\*)

There are probably few amongst those who think about these matters with any seriousness who have not experienced at least a difficulty in realizing how even God can be conceived to be keeping an accurate record of all the thoughts and doings and motives of the myriads of human beings who have lived and are now living upon this earth. The conception is so staggering to our limited sense-bound imagination that many have been overwhelmed by it and have ceased to believe the doctrine; or if they believe it, they believe it merely in the sense that they do not deny it, which is, as we know, an attitude of thought characteristic of many Christians of our day.

A single glance, however, at the psychological facts outlined in the opening paragraphs of this book, and an application of them to the doctrine under consideration, will cause this difficulty to vanish and will

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(\*) XX, 12 et seq.

show where the simple and reasonable solution of the difficulty is to be found.

St. John's vision tells us of a two-fold record that is to be unfolded on the Judgment Day. There is, in the first place, the book of life which we may regard as God's book, who, we are told, is "the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" that "neither is there any creature invisible in his sight: but all things are naked and open to his eyes." (\*)

With this statement we have necessarily to content ourselves. We know that no amount of learning or of study would help us to penetrate more deeply into the mystery enveloping this book of life—into what we may call the "how" of God's knowledge. It is by faith that we accept and assent to this truth.

But there are the other books spoken of by St. John, and since this word is used in the plural and we cannot imagine any other kind of book, it must refer to those

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(\*) Hebrews IV, 12-13.

records which, as we have seen, every human being possesses in his own mind.

Since everything, good, bad and indifferent, with all its attendant circumstances and complexities, is accurately inscribed on the tablets of the subconscious mind, we ourselves are, speaking quite literally, the books that will be opened on the judgment day.

There will, therefore, be a twofold record—God's and our own, so that anything of the nature of prevarication or of concealment respecting the life that is past will be simply unthinkable. All will be disclosed as it really was, as it originally occurred—with all the true intentions and aims and motives which caused or governed it. This conclusion is simply inevitable from the fact that, in a measure, we can already here, in the state of hypnosis, extract from a subconscious mind the entire truth as to a past life. Access to it, as we have seen, is gained in the degree in which the sense-life passes into a condition of sus-

pension or inactivity ; for it is the sense-life which keeps it from emerging into full consciousness. It follows, therefore, that the disclosure will be clear and complete, and an operation consciously realized, when the sense-life has disappeared entirely and the soul is separated from the body.

The thought is a tremendous one and well worthy of the most serious reflection by all conscientious and right-minded men. It is, to my mind, an illustration of the fact that God does not leave Himself without a witness to His truth—least of all in an age like ours in which such a witness is so urgently and so sorely needed.

We can thus well believe, as theologians maintain, that the illumination of the sense-emancipated soul will be a startling one on the day of judgment. We shall, at a glance, see our whole past life spread out before us and, what is more, we shall see things in their actual causes and relationships, and in their true proportions. All self-deception will be at an end ; no conceal-

ment will be possible; all will stand out with the greatest accuracy and clearness; our hidden or concealed motives, our sins of commission or omission, our rightly used or neglected opportunities, what was due to circumstance and environment and what to deliberate will and choice, the degree of our knowledge of spiritual things and our consequent responsibility, our use or abuse of God's grace, the good we have done to our neighbor or the wrong we have inflicted upon him. We shall know it all in a manner in which we could not possibly know it here on earth. And the highest probability is that our fellow-men too will know it—will, for the first time perhaps, see us in our true characters.

And in this sense each individual man will most certainly be his own accuser as well as his own judge. He will see the inevitableness of the destiny which he has been shaping for himself and from which there can be no escape. God's judgment will be thus but a confirmation of the judg-

ment he is compelled to pass upon himself.

I will leave it to other and abler writers, and to trained theologians, to develop this thought and to apply it to the endless complexities and varieties of human life and character. My aim here is to state the simple truth itself—to show what light true science can be shown to throw upon some of the deepest and most perplexing mysteries of the Christian faith and what folly it is to doubt any truth of faith because we do not fully understand here and now. Considering the nature of the source from which divine truth emanates and the morally corrupted nature of the creatures to which it comes, the marvel would be if we did fully understand.

It will, in any case, be admitted, even by the most superficial minds, that, granting the principles thus enunciated these results of psychological research impart to human life a seriousness and responsibility which can scarcely be exaggerated. They simply cut the ground from under the feet of the

scoffer and the materialist and, in a sense, become a new and forceful apologetic for some of the most fundamental truths of Christianity. They show the intimate relationship in which the present life stands to that which is to come and that, in the moral universe, law and order reign. Science itself makes it possible for us to admit the literal truth of that mysterious statement of our Lord that "for every idle word that men shall speak they shall have to give an account on the day of judgment." Well may the saints of God, who saw these truths in the clear light of faith and of inward illumination, warn us that "there cannot be too great security where eternity is at stake."

## CHAPTER IV

### PURGATORY

RECOGNIZING the truth, then, that law and order manifestly reign in the moral universe, and that the soul of man cannot be supposed to escape the destiny which it has prepared for itself during this earthly life, we gain a better understanding of all the mysterious doctrines of the Church respecting the Last Things. We come to see that what these teach must be the necessary and inevitable result of the sequence of cause and effect. God is hardly likely to transfer a soul to a place or state of life for which it has not fitted itself, and with the conditions of which it is out of harmony. And, since the soul undergoes at death an entire psychological change and passes into a mode of life where time and space have ceased to be and where a change of mind will be no long-

er possible, the reality of Heaven or Hell simply becomes the inevitable result of accurate thinking. There is nothing in the act of dying that could be supposed to change a character slowly formed by the aims and thoughts and acts of many years of life in the body. "Where the tree falls, there it must lie;" and this applies to Heaven as well as to Hell. For either of these states or places man is infallibly shaping his course day by day. Of these doctrines more will be said hereafter.

But it may be urged that Heaven—that is, the vision of God, of a life in intimate union with that which is pure and holy and undefiled, and in company with the saints and martyrs of God, would thus seem to be an almost unattainable good for the vast majority of men, sense—and earth-bound as the best of them know themselves to be; and a reflecting mind is, beyond all doubt, staggered by this inevitable inference. But it is, after all, by the legitimate following out of this mode of reasoning, and by fully

recognizing the inevitableness of the inference, that we come to recognize the greatness and, one may even say, the necessity of Christ's redemption. The destiny which the soul that has sinned could not possibly escape by the action of the law of cause and effect, it can escape by the law of mercy. God has emphatically declared that because of Christ's atonement, He will pardon the sinner who is sincerely penitent before death terminates the state of time and probation, and who will do penance for his sins.

The state of penitence, it should be noted, implies a change of will as well as a change of heart, and this is an attitude of soul which renders it teachable and therefore still capable of conforming with the divine law. A will that remains rebellious and obstinate to the last is manifestly a hopeless condition of soul.

A deep student of this subject of our own day has brought out this truth in the following clear and forcible words:

"In Purgatory, the deliberate active will is good from the first and only the various semi-volitions and old habits are imperfect, but are being gradually brought into full harmony with that will by the now complete willing of the soul; whereas in Hell, the deliberate act of will is bad from the first, and only various partially deliberate wishes and tendencies are good but cannot be brought to fruition in a full virtuous determination of the dominant character of the soul; and hence this state has no end." (\*).

But since the law governing the soul's life is not wholly abrogated by the mercy of God, and the sins of a lifetime, although pardoned, remain engraved upon the spiritual part of the mind, and since death may have made it impossible for a man to do penance and to atone for his sins in this life, penance must be done in the other life —he must go to Purgatory in order to be

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(\*) Fr. Von Huegel in "The Mystical Element of Religion."

cleansed and purified and made fit for Heaven. Reason itself would seem to demand this, and the sinner himself must really desire it; he must feel that he cannot be supposed to enter with his sin-laden soul into the presence of the All-Holy. He must, by suffering, cleanse himself from his sin and thus place himself "in rapport" with God, with the harmonies of Heaven.

And, in view of what must be held respecting the state of the soul after death and what we know of suffering already experienced here, we come to understand what the nature of some of the suffering in Purgatory must be. It is bound, of course, to be of infinite variety, both as regards intensity and duration—long and painful for some, brief and light for others. Here, too, law and order are beyond doubt in unfailing operation. It will be but a continuing of the suffering endured here, sharpened and intensified by the soul's separation from the sense-life and by its consequent clear vision and apprehension.

The memory of the spiritual soul, therefore, being infinitely more acute in the spirit-state than it was in what is called the composite state—in its union with the body—we shall, in the other life, see things as they really are—not as we have seen them here, or as we have striven to present them to others.

We know from experience that we can here throw a veil over our schemes and actions and artfully conceal from ourselves the true motives which have prompted us; can soothe our consciences with plausible sophistries and false maxims of the world in which we live. We can even create for ourselves a false conscience and continue in a state of self-deception throughout a long course of years. And we can do this so successfully that we can get the world and our fellow-men to take us at our face-value. And if in moments of recollection and reflection the disquieting consciousness of our own duplicity comes home to us and we are filled with fear, we can divert our minds,

seek relief in change of scene and environment, in intercourse with our similarly-afflicted but "rationally-minded" fellows and thus mitigate the accusations of conscience and the pangs of the soul.

But all this will, of course, be impossible when the soul is separated from the body. The scales will then fall from our eyes. We shall be in the position of a man who is suddenly led out of a dark or dimly-lighted room into the light of day. The soul will gain the right perspective and see things in their true light. Its sufferings, therefore, will be infinitely more keen and acute than they can ever be here. And they will be intensified by the consciousness that the past life can no longer be undone. Our earthly pains thus help us to understand and, as it were, anticipate the pains of the purgatorial state.

What do not sensitive natures suffer at the recollection of a cruel and heartless action towards one to whom they are related by the closest ties, who has perhaps shown

them nothing but kindness; at a hard and cutting word that has never been recalled; at a misjudgment that has darkened and saddened the life of one whom we called our friend? What would we not give if we could now speak the reconciling word to one whom we have injured or offended, or hear the assurance of forgiveness from one whose tongue has forevermore become silent? There are instances on record in which a long life has been saddened by the memory of a cruel word spoken or kind deed left undone. Few of us have stood by the grave of a loved one without experiencing some of these emotions.

But how beautiful and consoling are the dispensations of God's mercy when viewed in the light of these incontrovertible facts! How marvelously are they adapted to man's bitter and crying need! The Church teaches that these sufferings can be greatly modified and mitigated if we seriously strive to be honest with ourselves here and now, if we gladly embrace and offer up to

God in expiation all our earthly sufferings—if we strive to make atonement to Him in the manner and by the means appointed by the Church. The Saints of God have even embraced voluntary and additional sufferings in order to expiate past sins and to put themselves right with God. Reason and Revelation are surely in entire agreement here.

And what grave form do not our obligations assume towards the souls now in Purgatory when the matter is regarded from this point of view and in the light of the Church's teaching? These souls are in a state in which they must suffer, but in which they cannot help themselves. They are wholly dependent upon our prayers and intercessions—upon the masses, communions, and prayerful devotions, offered by us in their behalf. We do not quite know in what manner the merits of these vicarious works of atonement and expiation are applied to the suffering souls, but we can imagine how eagerly those souls must be

longing for them when they come to realize the helpless condition of their new state—what they must feel when they find themselves forgotten and neglected. With true wisdom and solid reason does the great St. Thomas tell us that “it is more meritorious to pray for the dead than for the living, since the living can pray for themselves and have innumerable means of grace at their disposal.”

But how solacing to us still living the composite life—the life in the body—is the thought that by our masses, devotions and intercessions for the departed we are not only honoring and pleasing God by performing one of the noblest acts of charity, but that we are thus in some measure atoning for wrongs which we have committed and are bringing intense satisfaction, true consolation and enduring peace, to our own souls!

## CHAPTER V

### HELL

**T**HIS book, the reader is again reminded, is not a treatise on Eschatology—an attempt to expound, even in brief form, the Church's teaching on the Last Things. Its aim is to supplement that teaching, as it were, by viewing it in the light of psychological facts and by showing how reasonable it appears when so considered. It is, therefore, not proposed to dwell at any length on the awful and mysterious doctrine of Hell, which is so great a stumbling block to so many earnest and sincere souls. The writer has himself fully felt and realized all that can in fairness be urged against this doctrine, and has examined it from every conceivable point of view. The results of his researches are embodied in a little volume which seems to have been helpful to many and to which some per-

plexed readers may care to refer. (\*).

The position here taken up is:

1. That the doctrine is, beyond all doubt, an integral part of the Christian Revelation.

2. That our better knowledge of the operations of the human mind and our conviction that law and order reign throughout God's universe, help us, in some measure at least, to see the reasonableness of this doctrine. It must be clear that, in our present state of existence, which is that of time and space, we can never hope to understand fully. The very word "eternal" involves a difficulty and may be the best possible term for conveying to our time-bound minds the condition of a state of life in which there is no time and for which there is consequently no adequate term.

One error which causes so many minds to rebel against the doctrine of Hell is prop-

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(\*) "Hell and Its Problems," published by the Catholic Union Store, 682 Main St., Buffalo, N. Y. Price 80c, inc. postage.

agated by the popular notion that, at the fall of Man, God created a fiery hell to which he meant to consign those impenitent souls that would pass into the other world in a state of rebellion against Him. This, of course, is a wholly mistaken notion which is nowhere embodied in the Church's authoritative teaching. Heaven and Hell are states or places of man's own creation, for one or the other of which he is ceaselessly shaping his course by the aims and character of his life on earth. They are the result of the operation of the law of cause and effect—an operation which we can clearly discern already in this life.

It has always seemed to me that there is a world of meaning contained in that word "remember" in the parable of Dives and Lazarus.

Is it not more than probable that memory will be one of the torturing elements, and indeed Hell itself, for souls to whom it is such already in many respects here?

The past life is, as we have seen, inscrib-

ed in all its details on that part of our spiritual nature which we take with us into the other world. The destruction of the sense-life, which has veiled that past life, will cause it and its every detail, to stand out in bold and clear relief. Self-deception and self-delusion will not be possible, nor will there be any escape from the processes of memory by diversion. The soul will therefore have nothing to feed upon but its memory—the past earthly life, its aims, its acts or omissions, the motives which prompted them, the moral effect which these have finally left upon the soul, how they have affected other souls. Can the imagination conceive a more terrible hell than this? And yet with the facts before us is not the conception inevitable?

Now think of the cold-blooded money-fiend, the destroyer of human happiness, the despoiler of the widow and the orphan, the lustful betrayer of innocent trust, the sensual glutton, the heartless schemer for position and power, in the pursuit of which

he has sacrificed the well-being of nations and the happiness of millions; the smug hypocrite, whose religion was but a profession and business-enterprise; the man of science, falsely so-called, who throughout a long life defied God and who, by the creations of his pygmy brain, has led others to defy and forget Him—think of such a man finding himself face to face with the truthful memory-pictures of his past life and never being able to get away from them. Can the imagination suggest a better term than Hell for such a state of existence?

To anyone, tempted to escape this dilemma by sophistry and by falling back on the fable of evolution and of the struggle for existence, according to which man's passions and cravings are but the survival of animal propensities over which poor human nature has but little control, I would reply in the words of an eminent American physician and anatomist: (\*)

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(\*) Dr. Dwight in "Thoughts of a Catholic Anatomist."

"Let anyone consider the refinement of vice in the cruelty, luxury and lust of the Roman empire and of Oriental despotism—for very shame's sake we shall look no nearer home—and he will find in it a malice very different from mere savagery. The cause lies deeper than in the survival of animal passions: it is far more suggestive of a fallen angel reveling in evil. It is not a return to a lower state but the corruption of a higher."

To which Mr. Chesterton adds:

"Man is always something worse or something better than an animal."

Are there not, I would ask, devils in human form living today in this our world for whom God would have to create a Hell if it did not exist? What, for instance, should be the destiny of the man of whom I heard the other day who, before killing another man who had injured him, endeavored to get that man to commit a mortal sin so that he might destroy him body and soul? Should God place that man in Heaven to be the companion of Saints like St.

Francis, St. Dominic, or St. Alphonsus? Or in Purgatory, where penitent souls are humbly and willingly embracing their suffering in order one day to be fit to enjoy the presence of God and of his Saints? What should a man of this type do in Heaven if such a setting aside of all order and law and justice could really be conceived? And, even supposing the will of rebellious men were still free after death, could that will be conceived to be obedient to the invitations which it has consistently ignored and despised while on earth? But all consistent theological thinkers, and indeed all true philosophical reasoning, assure us that, in view of the changed psychological condition of the soul, the will cannot be conceived to be free any longer.

I do not in the least know how the Universalists, the men who teach that there is salvation for all, would deal with these problems. One thing, it seems to me, is quite certain, and that is that if all ministers of religion were to teach that doctrine, this entire world of ours would soon be

a veritable Hell.

Our Lord, it need hardly be urged, warns us in the most unmistakable language, and by many striking illustrations, that this present life is our one and only trial-time and sphere of probation. And, "so far as we know," writes Dr. Dwight, "the earth and all physical creation exists that man's trial may take place. At least we know that this trial, involving the eternity of one single soul, is of infinitely greater importance than all non-rational creation."(\*)

It is when we look at matters from this point of view that we begin to better understand some of the reasons for the world's present great suffering. In the light of eternity these sufferings may, in the end, be dispensations of mercy, since they will at least lead some to consider their ways and to turn to that God whom they have ignored and despised but Who cannot abrogate His eternal and clearly revealed

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(\*) In "Thoughts of a Catholic Anatomist."

laws. It is manifestly by severe suffering alone that some men can be brought to their senses and that they can be induced to apply themselves to the true end of life. And can they complain of these sufferings if by them the end be attained and a happy eternity be secured?

"Terrible sufferings," writes the Oratorian, Father Dalgairns, "are often inflicted on souls because we are too much hurried away by the tumult of life to pray or to think or to study anything whatsoever, far less the science which the old monks taught us in the solitude and the silence of the desert."

## CHAPTER VI.

### MAN'S SPIRITUAL ENEMIES

I AM sorely tempted to refrain from referring, in this connection, to a subject which I have made a life-long and (in days gone by) experimental study and on which I have already written so much. A specialist is only too apt, I know, to be suspected of a sort of fanaticism, and of a tendency to see things exclusively from his own particular point of view. But facts which are almost daily coming to my knowledge, and the lamentable confusion of ideas at present prevailing on this subject, constrain me to refer to it once more, however briefly.

The phenomena of spiritism are, as is well known, engaging the attention of the thoughtful in all parts of the world, and everywhere questions are being asked respecting them which are receiving a variety of often mutually contradictory an-

swers. A number of wholly ignorant scribblers and exponents are at work ventilating their untenable and impossible theories and interpretations, and hopelessly confusing the issues. By far the larger number of them speak from mere book-knowledge and personal pre-conceptions and have manifestly themselves never witnessed and studied a genuine spiritistic phenomenon.

Some of them ascribe all the observed phenomena to fraud or to the "will to believe;" some to "hitherto undiscovered powers of the incarnate human mind"—a learned-sounding phrase which has proved quite a god-send to certain orders of mind.

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**Note:**

The silly notion that the subconscious mind, that refuge of the ignorant and of the materialistic scientist, must be held responsible for all these abnormal manifestations was very effectively commented upon by the late Prof. William James, who, as is well known, had an extensive knowledge of the subject. He wrote

"When I ascend from the details to the whole meaning of the phenomena and when I connect all the cases I know of automatic writing and mediumship with the whole record of spirit-possession in human history, the notion that such an immense current of experience, complex in so

many ways, should spell out absolutely nothing but the word 'humbug' acquires a character of unlikeliness.

"The notion that so many men and women, in all other respects honest enough, should have this preposterous monkeying-self annexed to their personality seems to me so weird that the spirit-theory immediately takes on a more probable appearance. At least if they, the spirits, are present some honesty is left in a whole department of the universe which otherwise is run by pure deception. The more I realize the quantitative massiveness of the phenomena and its complexity, the more incredible it seems to me that in a world, all of whose vaster features we are in the habit of considering to be sincere at least, however brutal, this feature should be wholly constituted by insincerity."

There are impressive-looking volumes in circulation, bearing the endorsement of individuals who are authorities on some subject or other, but who are manifestly as ignorant of this one as the compilers of these volumes themselves.

Others, again, imagine that when they have performed a few stage-tricks, which to the eye of the expert do not bear the remotest resemblance to the true phenomena, they have explained the whole thing.

There is, it cannot be denied, an extraordinary amount of conceit and arrogance about these prattlers. They think noth-

ing of throwing doubt upon the powers of observation of savants of world-wide reputation, who, by their contributions to science, have proved these powers to the world, but expect intelligent men to accept the explanations of nonentities like themselves, whose own powers of observation and of judgment have never been put to a practical test and of whom the world knows nothing at all.

In some instances, when all other arguments fail, they even resort to positive falsehoods respecting these scientific men, boldly asserting that they have repudiated their earlier conclusions and that they can therefore no longer be cited as credible witnesses.

These various futile attempts thus to overthrow long-known and well-established facts remind one of little children throwing pebbles at the moon and hoping thereby to bring down that luminary from the heavens.

Do these persons really imagine that those physical scientists who have staked

their reputations on facts accepted against their "will to believe," and after long years of patient observation, have not weighed all possible natural explanations and that they are utterly devoid of the most ordinary common sense?

Some persons seem to be wholly forgetful of the fact that, in spiritism, we are not dealing with phenomena which have been observed once or twice, at some remote period, and under rare and quite exceptional conditions, but that they are phenomena which can be induced at any time, by almost any kind of person, and that the conditions governing their production are becoming better known every day. We can, therefore, safely prophesy that the volumes setting forth views, wholly contradictory of the observed facts, will, in any case, find their way to the wastepaper basket before long.

The fact that, under given conditions, abnormal phenomena occur and that they are for the most part due to the operation of some kind of intelligence independent

of and apart from, the experimenter, is, of course, as well established a fact as any other fact in science, and I am in entire agreement with the late Prof. Hyslop, a life-long investigator, when he wrote:

"I regard the existence of discarnate spirits as scientifically proved, and I no longer refer to the sceptic as having any right to speak on the subject. Any man who does not accept the existence of discarnate spirits and the proof of it is either ignorant or a moral coward." (\*)

I have personally observed the phenomena in England and elsewhere, in the private houses of spiritists and non-spiritists, and in my own circle, in daylight, at all hours of the day, without the aid of a professional medium, and under circumstances and conditions which cannot leave a shadow of doubt in any sane mind. So far, therefore, as the facts themselves are concerned, my standpoint is most certainly that of the late Prof. Crookes, of Sir

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(\*) In "Life After Death," page 306.

Oliver Lodge, of Sir William Barrett, of the late Prof. Crawford and of many of the Italian and French scientists.

My published books, moreover, have brought me, in the course of the years, a vast correspondence with experimenters in all parts of the world, from whom I have been able to gather an immense amount of additional and valuable information. The point on which I have found myself to differ from them is not that of the phenomena themselves, but of their interpretation. Most experimenters are impressed by the surface-evidence and are inclined to believe that the spirits communicating are really the spirits of the dead. I was at first myself disposed to accept this interpretation, but fuller knowledge and painful experiences compelled me to modify this view, and I am now persuaded that they are more probably fallen angels masquerading as departed human souls. If it be a principle in science to adopt the theory which is seen to best account for all the known facts, not merely for an

isolated one here and there, then this theory is most certainly justified.

I have given my reasons for this view in fuller detail in my published works, especially in the most recent one, to which the reader may care to refer. (\*) Some-what bizarre as this conclusion may at first sight appear to certain minds, it is held by by far the most eminent of our theologians, and a steadily increasing number of scientific and non-Catholic thinkers are accepting it.

Baron Alfred Porcelli, speaking from an experience of nearly sixty years as a spiritist, wrote to the London "Saturday Review" (3389) quite recently:

"I have no hesitation in declaring:

"1. That grave danger lurks in spiritism.

"2. That the pretended spirits are not those of deceased relatives.

"3. That anyone who voluntarily sub-

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(\*) "The New Black Magic and the Truth About the Ouija Board."

mits to the unseen influences of these spirits becomes hypnotized and gradually controlled, mentally and spiritually, by a force infinitely more powerful than that of any human being. The result is very often insanity, not seldom, suicide, and frequently, immorality."

My studies and observations have further disclosed to me some of the methods by which these spirit-beings operate and it is, to my mind, of the greatest importance that at the present time, when thousands of unwary persons indulge in these experiments, both the aim of these spirits and their mode of operation should become well known. But it is mainly because these operations stand in vital relation to an important doctrine of the Church which, although so fiercely repudiated by modern thinkers, is yet so well established from the records of the New Testament, that I introduce the subject here.

I have come to see, with a great American thinker and quondam experimenter,

(\*) that the denial of this fact is not without its peculiar spiritual danger. Those, indeed, who are acquainted with the works of professed scientific spiritists will have recognized that this danger is a very great one and that it is time to speak out plainly.

With great truth and almost prophetic insight wrote the late Dr. Brownson many years ago:

"If much harm is done by superstition, perhaps even more is done by the denial of all demoniac influence and invasion and the attempt to explain all the so-called satanic phenomena on natural principles. It generates a skeptical turn of mind, and the rationalism resorted to will in the end be turned against the supernatural facts of religion. The same process which is adopted to explain away the satanic prodigies will be made use of to explain away the miracles of the Old and New Testaments. In fact it has been so done, and

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(\*) Dr. Orestes Brownson.

we have seen grave commentators laboring, as they believed, to explain these very miracles on natural principles, thus reducing Christianity from its high character of a supernatural Religion to a system of mere naturalism, at best a simple human philosophy perhaps inferior to many other systems."

Now prolonged observation and the study of striking cases coming to my knowledge have led me to the conclusion that these mysterious spirits, masquerading as the souls of the dead, are intelligences hostile to mankind, and that their aim is to invade the personality upon which they operate and ultimately to control, that is, to obsess or possess it. This is accomplished, more or less successfully by the induction of that state of trance of mind-passivity which is the characteristic of all mediumship. The degree of this control, its success or partial or complete failure, always depends on the degree of passivity attained, which again depends upon individual will-power and character.

It is certainly illustrative of the strange vagaries of the human mind that, while some of those whose religion commits them to a belief in evil angels that can injuriously affect mankind, maintain a skeptical attitude respecting this aspect of the subject, professed scientific spiritists who would gladly disprove all such conclusions, are positively driven to them by observed facts. In a recently published work by Mrs. Travers Smith, a daughter of the late Prof. Dowden of Edinburg, and the wife of a distinguished Dublin physician, appears the following:

"This was, I presume, a clear case of attempted obsession, first of Mr. X and then of me; it seemed quite clear that some external entity of a most dangerous kind was present at these sittings; it illustrates one of the greatest dangers connected with psychic work. \* \* \* The dangers of obsession are hardly realized by those who have not had some experience of them."

But I have further come to see that this spirit-influence is not merely in operation

in connection with induced mediumship, but that it is being continually exercised upon human minds, more or less successfully, according to the extent to which the nature or contents of a particular mind facilitate or block such operations. In other words, these spirits who, as Swedenborg justly said, "scent our inclinations as the dogs scent the game," act on the contents of the subconscious mind and thus get in on its thought-currents and direct those currents to their own ends. I am convinced that, along these lines, the solution of many a profound and perplexing problem respecting the moral life of mankind is to be found.

I have shown in my books from actual experience that most of the information given by these spirits respecting the life-history of those whom they impersonate is drawn from the passive subconscious minds of the experimenters, in whose minds they are contained. Spirits themselves, who did not manipulate this information very successfully and who were

convicted of their deception, have confessed this to me and have boasted of their ingenuity in thus misleading their dupes. If this kind of thing, therefore, be possible with regard to the ordinary life-records of persons, dead and living, it must be equally possible respecting the moral records, the character and disposition of those with whom they have thus succeeded in getting into "rapport." The spirits, beyond doubt, are able to read and decipher most of such memory-images deposited in the subconscious mind, and it is on these deposits that they work.

I am convinced that experience will endorse the accuracy of this conclusion and that it will find in it, as I have said, an explanation of many obscure and unexplained phenomena of the moral life. Many of my correspondents, and even some disillusioned spiritists, have freely admitted the entire legitimacy of this inference. And it seems to me that we have here, too, a demonstration of the law of order in the moral universe—of the sequence of

cause and effect, of activities permitted by God and of the nature and degree of human responsibility respecting those activities. No man can rightly say that he is here the sport of evil spirits against whom he knows of no means of protection. If they assault him successfully, he is most certainly responsible, since he has himself opened the way for their operations. (\*)

For such assaults would scarcely be possible if the subconscious images were clean and the character elevated, and if there were little or nothing in the soul with

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(\*) I am, of course, speaking here from the mere human and experiential point of view—of God's ordinary dealings with man. God's laws, it is hardly necessary to remark, binds us: they do not bind Him. He can at any time act independently of them and manifestly does so in those extraordinary dealings with the human soul, the reasons for which are wholly unknown to us. Nor am I referring to instances of heroic sanctity, of which we have record in the lives of many Saints and where God would seem to permit invasion by an evil spirit for the soul's higher sanctification. In such cases, while the evil spirit triumphs in the lower sphere, he is defeated in the higher, the soul advancing to an exalted degree of spirituality by this method of assault and "winnowing."

which such assaults could connect. But if the subconscious be low and vile—a kind of dung-heap created by the absorption of unclean images, the evil angels will necessarily have a fruitful field for their operations and the good angels will inevitably be barred out. The former will be able to produce just those effects which we observe in the lives of so many persons of our day. It is, in any case, a theory which explains much and which helps us to better understand many of those strange experiences in our soul's life which we often find so perplexing and disconcerting.

The sight of a sensuous picture may thus be the act of a moment; the impression however, has been taken and is preserved, latent and not remembered though it may be in the mind for a time. But, under favorable conditions, these spirits who can see the picture will deal with it as a photographer would; they will develop, enlarge and beautify it and thus present it to the imagination. And when temptation assails the soul, that temptation will most

certainly turn round this very picture. But it would have little force and would be more likely to fall flat, if the image were not there.

Now, Holy Scripture, the theologians of the Catholic Church, and all the masters of the spiritual life teach that "the greatest moral depravity is to be found in intellectual sins—in rebellion of the mind against Revealed Truth and established authority." "Every proud man," says Holy Scripture, "is an abomination to the Lord." (\*) "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning." (\*\*)

All human experience goes to confirm this. There is something positively diabolical in some forms of human pride. It is so tenacious and persists so obstinately to the end of life that a writer has well said: "It only dies a quarter-hour after the man himself has died." It has recently laid the world in ruins and is the ultimate source of

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(\*) Proverbs XVI, 5.

(\*\*) Tobias IV, 14i

all human sin and misery.

Intellectual pride, as we know, caused man to fall away from God and has ever since been the real source from which rejection and disbelief of the redemptive process instituted by Christ proceed. If these evil spirits therefore are fallen angels, it is by pride that they fell, and it would consequently be the pride of the human heart upon which they would chiefly center their operations and with which they would best be able to connect. It is conceivable that we can trace along these lines the true explanation of the well-known fact that, whatever diversity there may be in the teaching of the promoters of the new spirit-revelation, they are all agreed in their denial of the truth of Divine Revelation and of the divinity of Jesus Christ? I would at least suggest this thought to reflecting minds.

It should be remembered that it is upon this doctrine that the Christian Revelation and the entire sacramental system repose, and with its disappearance the whole

edifice falls to pieces and man reverts to paganism. It would therefore be to this foundation truth that we would expect the main attack to direct itself.

A similar danger is that of the empty or poorly-furnished mental storehouse, to which the evil spirits would seem to find it easy to gain access and in which they have apparently no difficulty in making themselves at home. According to an old saying, "a vacant mind is the devil's workshop," and this is perhaps a greater truth than may at first sight appear. Our Lord's warning, in any case, would seem to have this meaning. He tells us that when an unclean spirit is gone out of a man and cannot find a suitable habitation elsewhere, it is apt to return, and, finding the house swept and garnished, to take possession of it once more and to bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and that the last state of that man is worse than the first. (\*)

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(\*) Cf. St. Luke XI, 24-26.

Has this statement any bearing, I wonder, on those abnormal and unhealthy practices in connection with Theosophy, Christian Science, Spiritism and the New-Thought-Movement which are known to us under the name of trance, passivity and auto-hypnosis,—in which all the activities of the normal mind are suspended and which seem to be, for many, veritable high roads to the asylums just now?

I have an official statement from a psychopathic institution in this country, according to which twenty-four or more ouija patients entered the institution in the course of a few months. Half of them, it is stated, were released as cured and half were sent to insane asylums as incurable. (The ouija board, as all experts know, only becomes a medium for spirit-intercourse when the mind of the operator becomes passive. See my exposition in "The New Black Magic.")

A London Harley Street physician states that there are today in our asylums a hundred thousand cases caused by this terri-

ble cult—a strange effect surely, of playing with an instrument of which the supposed enlightened but very blind teachers of the blind, speak as “a mere innocent toy!”

But it is impossible to dwell upon this aspect of the subject here at fuller length; especially as I have not the remotest intention of speaking dogmatically. My desire is to show, from positive experimental knowledge, where, in my opinion, supplementary evidence in favor of an important doctrine of the Church may be found. And sufficient has been said to set the reader's mind thinking and to warn him of a very real danger. Those who may desire to go more deeply into the matters are referred to the chapter on Safeguards in my work “Christ and the Powers of Darkness,” of which a few copies are, I believe, still available. (\*)

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(\*) Inquire at Messrs. Benziger Bros., 36 Barclay St., New York.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HEAVEN

**K**EEPING, then, in mind the psychological facts set forth in the opening chapters of this book, we can scarcely fail to recognize that they apply with equal force to the Christian doctrine of Heaven. They enable us to see somewhat more clearly what that term implies and how very reasonable the doctrine itself is. We also arrive at a better understanding of what the joys of Heaven are likely to be and what the means are by which they can alone be secured.

Admitting the reign of law and order in the moral universe and, therefore, an aim and purpose, worthy of God, underlying the creation of man (for the achievement of which this transitory order exists) the sanctification of the soul and its full spiritual development will be seen to be the only possible and intelligible aim.

No other rational end or aim can be imagined. Reason itself, when freely and fairly exercised, would seem to postulate this inference, and the religious instincts of mankind confirm it. Any aim, restricted to the purely natural order—to this earthly existence with its short-lived joys, its pain and sorrow, its unfulfilled hopes, its affections formed and then rudely sundered, its final termination in the grave—make human life meaningless and do violence to our understanding and to our belief in God. What intelligible purpose could possibly be served by such an end? How could we even be expected to love and reverence a Creator Who causes His creatures to pass through so severe an ordeal with so unworthy and contemptible an end in view. With great truth and force wrote the late Prof. Thomas Dwight, M. D., of Harvard:

“Since God exists, we know that the riddle of the universe has an answer. God must have created the world for an adequate reason—for one worthy of Himself.

To think otherwise would be an insult to God and to our reason. But in this case the purpose, being worthy of God, must be a supernatural one dealing with higher things than matter, even than living matter. Hence, the supernatural in creation is not of secondary but of absolutely primary importance. It must be acknowledged as frankly as we accept any law of matter."(\*)

Acknowledging the entire reasonableness of this inference, therefore, we are not surprised to find that Revelation confirms the postulates of reason and of natural religion and defines for us, in authoritative form, what the true end of life is and how it is to be attained.

"You have been created by God," declares the Church, "to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this life in order to enjoy Him afterward, in the life to come." To serve God, therefore, with this supernatural end in view, expounds Saint Ignatius in his incomparable little book

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(\*) "Thoughts of a Catholic Anatomist."

(The Exercises), is “man’s paramount business, is his only business and is his most important business on this earth. If brought to a successful termination it is of itself sufficient to tranquilize the soul and to satiate its desires.” For the enjoyment of God, then, and for the attainment of the end of life we must create a qualification or capacity, and we must create that capacity in this life—we must attain unto “holiness without which, it is positively declared, “no man shall see God.”(\*) We cannot possibly acquire it in the other since that life is a terminus of a state of existence which, from its very nature, can alone be the sphere of a probationary and educational process.

Here, too, we trace the reign of law and order—the unerring sequence of cause and effect—the necessity of man’s co-operation with God in the attainment of the true end of life.

Now, respecting God’s action in the

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(\*) Hebrews XII, 14.

creation of man's capacity for the life of heaven, it is not necessary to speak at any length here. Every rightly-instructed Catholic knows what it is. He knows that grace is given to all; that God, by His inspirations and invitations, and by certain sacramental operations, initiates, as it were, the redemptive—the heavenward—process, and that He furnishes all the means and aids necessary for the end in view.

Respecting man's action, too, we are adequately instructed. We know that man must respond to these inspirations and must submit himself to the process proposed—must yield obedience. All this seems altogether logical and reasonable and every man who has put the process into operation has found it to be so. What psychological research does for us, I think, is to help us to better understand the "how" of the process and more clearly to see by what method the end is achieved.

It goes without saying that by, reason of his fallen nature, man's mind is natur-

ally more receptive of the wrong than of the right kind of impressions. It is, in any case, full of images which are sensuous and earthly and which, by supplying the spiritual soul with the wrong kind of material, hinder its upward flight. False science, too, the absorption of mistaken notions respecting the nature of life and of human duty and responsibility create unfavorable impressions which go to cripple and paralyze the soul's activity. These impressions, therefore, have to be counteracted; they have to be effaced so far as this is possible, and new and healthful impressions have to be formed. And this can only be achieved by the apprehension and constant systematic contemplation of Divine Revealed truth, by which the sense-life is kept in check, the tablets of the memory are kept free from unholy and distorted images, and an upward and Godward direction is given to the movements of the soul.

And if such favorable images, formed by a previous careless or positively sinful

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life, are the dominating ones, wholly unfitting the soul for contact with God, they have to be written over, as it were—rendered inactive and innocuous by new and holy impressions, the mind becoming like one of those ancient manuscripts on which two kinds of writing can be traced but on which only the more recent one is the legible one. It is clearly only in this way that a capacity for intercourse with God, and fitness for the life and joys of Heaven, can be created. We cannot, unless God works a miracle, conceive the possibility of such a state for one who departs this life with his memory-images unclean and distorted, and with a consequent state of soul which has no affinity with the conditions of the new order of things.

Now, every man who has in any degree practised such contemplation of Divine truth, such intercourse with God, knows that it is productive of real and solid happiness, of the only true kind of happiness, indeed, attainable on this earth. It furnishes the soul with superhuman strength

and courage; it inspires the heart with the noblest ideals and motives; it satiates the mind's craving and produces true peace and tranquility in the soul. Thousands of saints and martyrs of all races and nations bear witness to this fact. St. Augustine, one of the ablest of men and of the greatest of God's saints, who must have had a fearful task in producing on the tablets of his mind the right kind of writing and of cultivating intercourse with God, expressed this truth in that famous exclamation: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is troubled until it rests in Thee."

When Jesus led his disciples to a high mountain and was transfigured before them, holding converse with two inhabitants of the other world, that other world was brought so near to them that they desired to abide on the mountain and not return to the sordid cares and interests of the material world. In a lesser degree this desire is experienced by those who have tasted the joys of converse with God

by mental prayer and colloquy, and by meeting Him face to face in the sacraments. Joy and peace flow from such intimate, though necessarily imperfect, relation and intercourse.

But—and here I come to the main point of my argument—if so great and enduring a degree of happiness is attainable in this present life, where, by reason of our sense-bound nature, we discern Divine Truth only in dim outline, can only know in part and see as “through a glass in a dark manner,”(\*)—how great must that happiness be in a state of life in which the veil will be removed from our eyes, where we shall see clearly, and where the memory-images of Divine Truth formed in this life will experience a full development.

Well may the Apostle, who had evidently been engaged in some such process of reasoning, exclaim in the words of the Prophet: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of

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(\*) I Corinthians XIII, 9-12.

man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."(\*)

In God's light, says St. Bernard, the memory grows clear, not dim, and in this light we learn what we did not previously know, but we do not forget what we learned before.

A second joy of heaven, one can well imagine, will consist in the soul reaching that very state of finality which seems to be such a stumbling block to so many of our modern philosophers. They speak in vague terms of a continuation of the educational process beyond the termination of the sense-life, and find it difficult to believe that physical death is in any sense a terminus, involving the possibility of either Heaven or Hell. But they seem to ignore the fact that a condition of unalloyed happiness is irreconcilable with a state of uncertainty in which the soul's destiny is forever trembling in the balance and in which a man can still change his mind.

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(\*) I Corinthians II, 9.

What a Christian feels, perhaps, most in this life, is the possibility—never altogether absent while life lasts—of his committing sin and falling away from God—of his forfeiting Heaven. This possibility, although it constitutes, no doubt, a certain necessary safeguard for the soul, is, on the other hand, a source of very great uneasiness, constantly disquieting the soul and never allowing its joy to become quite perfect. The greatest of God's saints have experienced it and have, for this reason alone, longed to be free from the fetters of the sense-life.

The cessation of such a state through the consciousness that the great goal is reached, that the will is finally fixed in God, and that the falling away from Him is no longer possible must, in itself, be a state of happiness of which we can only form a faint conception here and now.

In any case, reasoning from our soul-experiences here in the composite state, we cannot well imagine Heaven to be Heaven if it is inhabited by souls whose ul-

timate destiny is still undecided, and who are therefore in a state of restlessness and uneasiness. But it must be clear that if the state of probation be continued for the soul of the sinner and his destiny be not determined at the separation of the soul from the body, the same thing must be postulated for the soul of the saint, and Heaven would then be quite impossible and unthinkable.

Another joy of Heaven which we can well conceive will be the companionship of, and the sustained intercourse with, like-minded souls who may have reached the supreme goal by very varying paths, but who have been dominated by identical aims and desires. We often crave for such intercourse here on earth, for the exchange of ideas with men who think and feel as we do, and who have set their minds and hearts on the one thing that is really worth thinking about. We are rejoiced to meet such men and we love to linger in their company. We feel encouraged and elevated by intercourse with them and we wish

that that intercourse could continue, and that we could come to know them still better. But the silly, conventionalities of life hinder, or at least limit, such soul-intercourse. Religious men are apt to be reserved; they have a fear of being misunderstood, of being suspected of a saintliness to which they do not care to lay claim, and they know only too well that, in our day, a vast amount of utter worldliness is apt to hide itself under familiar religious phrases. Sympathetic persons may, therefore, be treading the same path through life together; they may be in daily contact, and yet their respective souls may be closed books the one to the other. The one may only catch an occasional glimpse of what is going on in the secret depths of the other. And meanwhile we have to submit to being bored by persons who will talk to us by the hour of what is of no consequence at all—about things that have not the remotest interest for us.

In Heaven we shall know as we are known; there will be no concealment. All

souls will be in whole-hearted sympathy and affinity and—let us thank God—there will be no bores there. We shall not have to endure the companionship of men who will talk to us by the hour about a golf or football match, or about the respective merits of the various kinds of motor cars; for the mind images formed by such all-dominating interests will manifestly be of no use in Heaven.

There are other joys of Heaven which the imagination can well conceive, but a consideration of them would carry me beyond the limitations imposed by the main aim pursued in this book.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE WAY OF SALVATION

**T**HERE remains one aspect of the subject on which it seems necessary to dwell, however imperfectly and inadequately.

It will be urged, that, while by reason of our sense-bound and fallen nature and our existence in this objective sense-world, mind-images, unfavorable to our spiritual development, are easily formed, the holy images, helping forward that development, are with difficulty acquired. The world from which they emanate is, for our present state of being, a subjective world; it cannot be seen and touched and it does not therefore appeal to us with the same force and reality with which the sense-world does. How then are those holy images, from which the soul is to draw its material, to be formed? How can that spiritual world for which we are destined assume

for us, here and now, something of an objective character?

The answer to this question is given to us by all the great masters of the spiritual life. It is achieved by meditation and prayer. Supernatural truths, such as man's fall, the true character and effect of sin, the necessity and fact of redemption, Christ's divinity and His Resurrection, the soul's sanctification as the end of life, are not truths that can be discerned with the eye of the body or with the natural understanding. They are believed on the authority of God, Who, by His Spirit, disposes the soul to believe, and they are apprehended and assimilated by the soul by interior, i. e., soul-acts and practices. It could not well be otherwise; for if we could touch and handle these truths, as it were, by observation, they would be truths of science or conclusions of the natural understanding. The most learned man would then get to know them best of all and the unlearned would have a poor prospect of salvation and sanctification. As it is, the

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learned man, especially when he is enlightened by “knowledge falsely so-called,” is often very ignorant of spiritual truths, while the unlearned, in many instances, has an exceptionally clear perception of them and is on the high road to Heaven. The difference between them is that one applies himself to a study of the things of God and to prayer, and the other does not. One is systematically forming images on which the spiritual soul can feed, and the other is not.

St. Alphonsus de Liguori says:

“Eternal truths are spiritual things that are not seen with the eyes of the body, but only by the reflection of the mind. He that does not meditate does not see them; and thus he advances with difficulty on the way to salvation; and further, he that does not meditate does not know his own failings and thus, as St. Bernard says, he does not detest them; so also he does not see the perils of his state and therefore does not think of avoiding them. But when we meditate, our failings and perils quickly

present themselves; and when we see them, we seek to correct them."(\*)

I am convinced, from systematic and long study and observation, that I am here touching a subject which is of the deepest possible importance and which stands in more intimate relation to the cause of religion and to the grave problems by which the modern world is confronted than most people are disposed to believe.

To my mind the real peril of our time, is to be found neither in the creation of false religious systems nor in the assaults which the Catholic Faith is suffering at the hands of schismatics and heretics and unbelievers, but in a certain over-emphasis laid on the various forms of external activity and the consequent neglect of the interior life.

There is, unhappily, a natural disposition, even in the religious man, to adapt himself almost automatically to his environment; to adopt the principles and to

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(\*) In "The Way of Salvation," page 214.

copy the methods, of that restless, fussy world of our day which expends all its energies on practical schemes of organization and social reform, and which cannot see any good in anything that does not express itself in some visible and tangible form and in bricks and mortar. And, in most instances, this restless kind of activity becomes a substitute and is made to do duty for those higher spiritual exercises without which the soul cannot progress and without which the result of all this external activity cannot be enduring and fruitful.

Have we not a practical illustration of this fact in the utter collapse of the world's most perfect schemes for man's temporal well-being, and may not God be teaching us this lesson by that very collapse? Will any human scheme ever have any permanence or stability if, in its aim and conception, God and the eternal interests and primary obligations of man are left out of sight? May it not be true that, as Dr.

Orestes A. Brownson, said:

"A single prayer offered in secret to Almighty God by some devout soul, unknown to the world, can effect more than our most elaborate articles or brilliant stirring editorials. God loves the simple and humble and will do anything for them. The times are fearful, the dangers are thick and threatening. Let us betake ourselves to prayer as the surest and speediest remedy."

Would to God that our modern reformers and reconstructionists would recognize this truth and learn this lesson. According to all the great masters of the spiritual life, external activity, divorced from spiritual aims and ends, is destructive to the higher energies of the soul's life, and, in its practical ultimate effects, disastrous to the true progress of religion. Christ Himself solemnly warns us against it. In the Apostolic writings, man's spiritual obligations always have the first place. When Martha was fussing about, looking after the temporal needs of her Divine Guest and thereby missing His instruc-

tions, Christ rebuked her and told her that she was concerning herself far too much with these things, and that there was only one thing that really mattered and that was needful, since it was imperishable. He cannot be supposed to have meant that care for bodily wants was not needful and lawful, in its right and proper place, but that other and higher duties must be fulfilled first and that the latter must be the outcome of them and not substitutes for them. Pray without ceasing, pray again and pray always if you would be saved, is the burden of our Lord, and of His Apostles' injunctions and is the unvarying commendation of all the great teachers of religion. And what they meant, of course, is mental prayer and meditation by which the soul is brought in direct contact with God and by which alone those impressions and images are formed on which it can feed and upon which it can construct its life.

St. Alphonsus went so far as to say that he could not see how any man who did not

systematically engage in mental prayer and meditation could save his soul; and he was one of the deepest students of human nature and of the mysteries of the spiritual life.

"Action—feverish, insistent, universal—has built up a world that has failed, and out of that failure will come the consciousness that the real things in life are of the spirit, not of the flesh; not of man, but of God.\* \* \* Our age is dying because it has lost spiritual energy and therefore no longer knows the difference between the real and the false, the temporal and the eternal, between right and wrong; and this spiritual energy is to be restored, not by action but by the grace of God—and by prayer alone is this grace given to men."(\*)

It seems to me to be utterly impossible for any man to get a firm grip on supernatural truth, to retain that truth in his mind and heart, to build up a true spiritual life and to make that life spiritually serviceable to others, if he is incessantly en-

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(\*) R. A. Cram, Litt. D., LL.D., in "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh."

gaged in the promulgation of all kinds of social schemes and if his religious acts are in consequence of a more or less automatic character. The two forms of activity somehow do not go together, and, with few exceptions, the latter is invariably exercised at the expense of the former.

And the peril is that the latter is so often mistaken for the former and is substituted for it. We are subject to an immense amount of self-deception in this respect and it is often only by bitter experience that the truth is brought home to us.

An experienced religious teacher (\*) of our time writes:

“In the life that is principally active, the soul is agitated, feverish and scatters its energy and is thereby weakened. It labors under a three-fold disadvantage of being anxious in its thoughts, and disturbed in its affections, by a multitude of occupations; hence, its efforts and acts are divided.”

“He who neglects meditation,” says St.

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(\*) Abbot J. B. Chantard, in “The True Apostolate.”

Alphonsus, (\*) "and is distracted with worldly affairs will not know his spiritual wants, the dangers to which his salvation is exposed, the means which he must adopt in order to conquer temptation. \* \* thus he will give up the practice of prayer and, by neglecting to ask God's graces, he will certainly be lost."

I am inclined to think that this applies even to excessive intellectual activity and to that kind of over-education which, by reason of the multiplicity of the subjects studied, produces in the end only a half-educated man and in, alas, too many instances, stunted and crippled souls.

Cardinal du Perron, the celebrated theologian and controversialist, testified when about to die, his regret at having been more careful to improve his mind by the study of the sciences than by the exercises of the interior life.

Our troubled and storm-tossed age, surely, is in far greater need of spiritual than

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(\*) In "*The Way of Salvation*," page 214.

of intellectual men, and, since the two qualities are not often combined, we are safe in putting the emphasis on the former. It is a soulless and Christ-less culture, let it be remembered, that has wrecked the modern world and that has thrown both rulers and nations back into the bondage of anarchy and paganism. It is the forgetting of the Divine law that, since we are destined for a supernatural end, we must first of all seek the Kingdom of God and leave everything else in His hands and regard it as of quite secondary consideration, that has produced the present fearful state of things. For it is the conscientious observance of this law that not only enables a man to attain his true destiny but that also regulates all the duties and relationships of the present life and leads him to deal justly and rightly with his fellows. Its observance would most certainly make most of the modern schemes of social reconstruction wholly unnecessary.

“You will see,” writes Saint Alphonsus, “that as long as a person makes mental

prayer he is modest, humble, devout and mortified in all things; but let him omit meditation and you will instantly find him wanting in modesty of the eyes, proud, resenting every word, undevout, no longer frequenting the sacraments of the Church; you will find him attached to vanity, to useless conversations, to pastimes and to earthly pleasures."(\*)

Another obstacle to the true development of the soul's life is, in my opinion, the adoption of a mistaken and purely automatic method of prayer from which meditation on the truths of the supernatural order is absent. The question is whether such automatic "saying of prayers" is prayer at all in the Christian sense—whether the soul is by it supplied with that material upon which it can construct its life. The difficulty will be recognized when the psychological law, enunciated here, is borne in mind. We have seen that just as the contemplation of earthly

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(\*) In "The Great Means of Salvation."

things forms a man's character and determines his life and his interests, so the contemplation of supernatural things forms the spiritual nature and directs its energies and its aims. And it is difficult to see how this latter end can be achieved by the repetition of words not formed by the mind employing them, and not the outflow of a soul-want or experience. They can be but empty sounds if they be not accompanied by reflection and meditation—they can be but an "honoring of God with the lips while the heart is far from Him."(\*)

Such praying can neither satisfy the promptings of the soul nor can it create that intimate relationship with God without which a true spiritual life is unthinkable. One might as well resort to the prayer-wheel of the Indian. It generally leads to an excessive practice of those devotions which promise a maximum of graces for a minimum of effort. Of course,

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(\*) *Isaias XXIX, 13.*

I am not speaking here of prayers offered on behalf of others, nor of those devotions authorized by the Church in which the individual joins in the prayers offered by other individuals all over the world and in which the intention is the main aim. All the public prayers of the Church must, of course, be such formulated prayers since they are offered for and with all the faithful. The Divine Office, recited by the priest, is such a form of prayer: when the priest recites it in private he does so in union with, and with the intention of, the Universal Church.

It is, to my mind, much to be regretted that we are overloaded today with an endless number of prayer-books, artistically constructed and attractively printed and bound, and providing ready-made prayers for every conceivable state of mind or desire of the heart. They are but too well calculated to let the soul, by slipping into the thoughts of other minds, turn the noblest and most important act of life into a purely mechanical and automatic pro-

cess. Helpful though such ready-made prayers may be to some who know how to use them, they are worthless, it seems to me, if they are made to take the place of the soul's direct and intimate intercourse with God. They invariably tend to minister to that spiritual lethargy and soul-indolence which, as we all know, is one of the soul's greatest and most obstinate faults.

"Many," says Saint Augustine, "cry not with their own voice, (that is with the interior voice of the soul) but with that of the body." "We must not," writes Father Grou, "make use of so many books, pious practices or exercises, or systematic methods; we must seek in our own hearts for what we would say to God and then say it with all simplicity."(\*)

A single ejaculation, expressing the soul's need, and formulated in simple language dictated by that need, may thus be of greater value and more acceptable to

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(\*) In "Prayer and the Spiritual Life."

God than all such ready-made prayers.

The systematic repetition of prayers, formulated by other minds, moreover, leads to the systematic and excessive practice of vocal prayer, and this may become such a mechanical performance that it may leave the soul's life quite untouched and the moral character quite unaffected. "Long vocal prayers," says Father Grou, "are generally the characteristic of those whose devotion is all exterior." A wholly unreformed life has indeed, as we all know, gone hand in hand with such modes of prayer, which is in itself a striking proof that by them a fundamental psychological law is ignored and violated. The saints were well aware of this fact and were never tired of pointing out the peril of this kind of self-delusion.

"In general, vocal prayers are said distractedly with the voice of the body but not with the heart, especially when they are long and, still more especially, when said by a person who does not make mental prayer; and therefore God seldom hears

them and seldom grants the graces asked. Many say the Rosary, the Office of the Blessed Virgin and perform other works of devotion, but they still continue in sin. But it is impossible for him who perseveres in mental prayer to continue in sin; he will either give up meditation or renounce sin."(\*)

"He will never know how to live well," says Saint Augustine "who has not learned to pray well"; and Bossuet declares that "the hands raised heaven-ward overcome more enemies than those who strike."

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(\*) St. Alphonsus in "The Great Means of Salvation."

## CHAPTER IX.

### CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

**T**HE MAIN argument of this book may then be briefly summed up as follows:

Both natural and Revealed Religion, as well as the postulates of reason and of true science, establish the fact that man is destined for a supernatural life, for which the present transitory life is the one sphere of training and preparation—"that this life and this world are but episodes in a tremendous and supernatural drama in which the eternal future of every individual man is at stake. (\*)"

A happy supernatural future can only be achieved by the attainment of holiness —of soul-wholeness, a state of being for which man must diligently and constant-

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(\*) Dr. Dwight: "Thoughts of a Catholic Anatomist."

ly pray and labor here and now, and to which all the other interests and pursuits of life must be subordinated.

For its achievement divine promptings and divine and unfailing aids are furnished by God Himself, which however only become effective if man avails himself of them and thus gladly and whole-heartedly co-operates with God.

The ineffaceable and constant testimony of conscience reminds man that he is responsible, and that he is free to submit himself to, or to decline, the sanctifying process.

The Judgment Day, Heaven and Hell are not only divinely-revealed truths but facts, to which reason, the very nature of man's constitution, and science itself, bear witness. In the light of these truths human life and its apparently most indifferent acts assume an immense and eternal significance.

It is possible for man to fail to attain a happy supernatural future, and indeed, he is bound to fail if he loses sight of the supernatural end for which he exists, and if he neglects to make use of the divine aids furnished to him.

In man's own eternal interests, therefore, God is bound to destroy or to render ineffective every device and work of man which is in the least calculated to divert him from his end and to make him center his interest and energies on purely temporal and transitory good. He is even bound to inflict severe temporal sufferings upon him if by that means he is forced back to the right course and the higher enduring good is attained.

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Note:

"Wealth and ease, peace and plenty, material success and serene content never won anything either for the individual, the community, or the state, while they lead inevitably to decadence and downfall. Adversity and suffering, sorrow and labor and sacrifice, are the builders of character, the foundation stones of the lighthouse of civilization."—Ralph Adams Cram, LL.D., in "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh."

All such suffering would, from God's point of view, be but manifestations of His mercy and love, since it is by them alone that greater and eternal suffering is spared us, and that the true end of life is secured and the soul is saved.

The Cross of Christ has, in any case, demonstrated fully and adequately that, since man has fallen and is earthly-minded, suffering and pain are, if accepted, a redemptive process and an effective means of exhibiting the comparative worthlessness of all earthly good.

The truths presented, therefore, stand in more intimate relation to the present state of the world and of mankind than might at first sight appear. They help us to understand its cause and meaning, and to reconcile all the suffering and pain inflicted upon the world with the goodness and mercy of God.

They also point us to the one possible

stable and enduring remedy for the world's physical and moral ills. They show us that, since man's sickness and his failures have a spiritual and not a natural cause, the remedy must be a spiritual and not a natural one.

And the remedy consists in a firm and constant and whole-hearted assent to the supernatural truths revealed, and confirmed by science, and in a life so completely lived in the light of them that all transitory good becomes of a purely secondary consideration and solely a means to an end, the schemes and devices for man's good being thus the outcome of his assent and of this life, and not a substitute for them.

Man must further recognize as incontrovertible fact that a happy supernatural future cannot be achieved by the intellectual assent to the truths of Faith alone, or by purely external and automatic acts of religion, but by the cultivation and development of an interior life, which is "not

an easy but a difficult, and a very difficult, task" (\*) "demanding boundless labor (\*\*) and unceasing diligence.

But, since it is the Catholic Church alone which has made no compromise with the time-spirit, which has preserved and constantly presents to man the facts of his eternal destiny, and provides him with all the means necessary for happily attaining it, it is in the hands of the Church alone that the means of man's salvation and the true remedy for the healing of the nations is to be found.

This truth is confirmed by the fact that, once before in the history of man, the

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Note:

"As it is religion alone, the religion of Christ crucified, that can save man at this juncture, so it is the Catholic Church, through its sacraments and by the strength of its supporting philosophy, that alone can act as the engine of redemptive operation. \* \* \* The unity of the Church in the Catholic Faith and under Catholic authority is the instant and desperate necessity."—R. A. Cram, LL.D., in "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh."

(\*) St. Alphonsus.

(\*\*) St. Augustine.

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truths proclaimed by the Church saved a pagan civilization from corruption and decay and imparted to man the power of a new life.

It is confirmed by the circumstance that, at this day, heathen nations are, by these truths, redeemed from savagery and barbarism.

It is solidly established by the lives and testimony of innumerable martyrs who, in order to possess the enduring good, surrendered all temporal good and life itself.

It is daily proved by the experience of living men, who have whole-heartedly accepted and embraced these truths and who have in them found the only happiness and satisfaction attainable in this life, and the assurance of enduring happiness hereafter.

It is, in my opinion at least, finally confirmed by the manifest fact that all the

devices and schemes of man for his well-being, in the conception and carrying out of which this primary truth has been ignored, have collapsed and proved worthless, and have produced a state of things which seems almost past redemption.

This failure would seem to indicate not that the structures themselves are necessarily at fault but that the foundations are insecure, thus strikingly illustrating the great truth that "other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid which is Christ Jesus."(\*)

It is to Christ, therefore, to the historical, divine Christ and His teaching that the world must revert if it would be regenerated.

With this true Christian and Catholic conception of things, therefore, deeply and firmly engraved upon heart and mind, and with the scientific truths here presented

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(\*) I Corinthians III, 11.

steadily kept in view, a reflecting mind can scarcely fail to assent to that striking saying of the saints of God: that he who believes in eternity and becomes not a saint must be either a fool or a madman.

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Note:

A writer of our day, a misguided champion of the "New Revelation" (Sir A. Conan Doyle) tells us that Christianity must change or it must perish but it is, alas! only too true that it has perished in proportion as it has changed.



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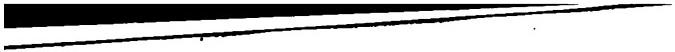














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